



CONGRESSMAN HENRY A. WAXMAN NEWS

2444 RAYBURN H.O.B.
8425 WEST 3rd STREET

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515
LOS ANGELES, CALIF. 90048

202-225-3976
213-651-1040

September 23, 1982

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact: Jack Ebeler
(202) 225-4952

WAXMAN CONDEMNS REAGAN ADMINISTRATION APPOINTMENTS TO MEDICARE ADVISORY COUNCIL -- REQUEST CHANGES

Congressman Henry A. Waxman (D-Calif.) today condemned the Reagan Administration's recent appointments to a Medicare advisory council, saying that the lack of balance among the appointees "seems to reflect this Administration's continuing disregard for those served under our nation's health and social insurance programs. There are no representatives of the elderly and disabled that Medicare serves, and no representatives of the third party payors and the voluntary health sector that are so important to our nation's health financing and delivery system." Congressman Waxman, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Health and the Environment of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, was joined by Congressman Andy Jacobs (D-Ind.), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Health of the House Committee on Ways and Means, in a letter to Health and Human Services Secretary Richard Schweiker urgently requesting that he reconstitute the panel.

The letter to Schweiker points out that "For the 29 million aged and disabled citizens who currently are entitled to Medicare benefits and for additional millions who will be entitled to the benefits in the future, the Medicare program is a critical component of our nation's Social Security System. The issues that we all must confront in reviewing this program are difficult and extremely controversial. In just the past year, the Administration's budget proposals have led to discussions of increased cost-sharing by beneficiaries, turning the program over to the private sector through vouchers, and, most recently, means-testing Medicare. As you know, all of these issues raise great fears that the entitlement and benefits of the aged and disabled will be limited, and financing of their care turned over to the private sector."

The letter goes on to say that "We find it distressing that you have not appointed any representatives of the elderly and disabled citizens that Medicare serves, and we understand that the major national organizations representing the elderly will be contacting you to express their displeasure at being excluded from the process. That omission is intolerable if this Council is to review and report on issues such as increased cost-sharing, vouchers, and even means-testing of Medicare -- proposals that directly affect these aged and disabled individuals. Moreover, there are also no representatives of private health insurers, health maintenance organizations, or the voluntary health sector that is the cornerstone of our nation's health system. Those omissions will drastically reduce the Council's capacity to deal with the difficult financing and delivery issues that they will undoubtedly want to address."

Waxman concluded that "Any recommendations from the Council as now constituted will not be perceived as objective or credible given the unbalanced nature of the appointments. The vital importance of the issues that confront us in serving 29 million aged and disabled citizens under Medicare dictate that you reexamine the membership and reconstitute a more balanced Council. We urgently request that you do so."